

CALIFORNIA SENATE FELLOWS



2001-2002



"Walking to work each day, I catch my breath when the Capitol comes into view. It is difficult to imagine working in a more awe-inspiring environment. In staffing human services issues for my Senator, I met with community members who told a mixture of uplifting and difficult personal stories. They put a human face on the problems the Legislature attempts to solve."

Nisha Vyas



California State University
Sacramento

Dear Friend:

At no other time in its history has California been so squarely at the forefront of societal change and public policy demands. The list of challenges and opportunities for meaningful public policy decision-making is unprecedented in this state or any other.

A small group of keenly interested, deeply motivated and talented individuals has the opportunity to work within this environment as California Senate Fellows. With the Capitol as both workplace and classroom, Senate Fellows serve as professional Senate staff members and earn graduate units from California State University, Sacramento.

CSUS is proud to jointly sponsor the California Senate Fellows program with the State Senate. We look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Donald R. Gerth".

DONALD R. GERTH
President
California State University, Sacramento

"The Senate Fellows program provides a supportive environment in which a diverse group of individuals with varying degrees of professional experience can explore firsthand the inner-workings of government."

Pablo Tagre



"When I came to Sacramento, I wasn't sure what was in store for me. I had been encouraged to apply by a former Fellow, but I didn't know a lot about the legislative process. The program orientation helped me to understand various components of the process and introduced us to a number of key participants in California policy-making."

Vanessa Tyson

Experience and Insight Into the Legislative Process

Established in 1973, the California Senate Fellows program, formerly known as the California Senate Associates program, grew out of a desire to provide people of diverse ages, experience and backgrounds with insight into the legislative process. It offers college graduates a paid, full-time legislative staff experience in the State Capitol for 11 months. Fellows also participate in academic seminars conducted by California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) faculty.

Ideally, the experience of being a Senate Fellow will broaden the perspective of those planning academic, business or government careers so that they will carry into their chosen fields an understanding of the legislative process and how it relates to their work. In addition to providing Fellows with exposure to the legislative process, the program provides Senate members and policy committees with research and other professional staff assistance.



"The program strikes a unique balance by creating an intellectual forum for the exchange of political ideas and theory while also providing a complimentary 'real world' application of those ideas in the Legislature."

James Jack



"As a Fellow, I was welcomed onto my Senator's staff and given the full responsibilities of a legislative aide. I reviewed bills that came before committees and worked on my Senator's own legislation. Almost every day brought a new challenge."

Kabrina Kau

Fellows are expected to have strong interests in public policy and politics, but prior legislative experience is not required. A five-week orientation at the beginning of the program includes information and discussion pertaining to state government, the legislative process and major policy issues. Fellows meet and hear from legislative staff, journalists, lobbyists and various state government officials.

In 1984, the program affiliated with the Center for California Studies at California State University, Sacramento, and is now operated jointly by the Senate and CSUS.





*Mock
Committee
hearing.*



During their program orientation, Fellows are introduced to many aspects of the legislative process. They participate in mock committee hearings by assuming the roles of Senators, staff, lobbyists, and members of the public.

"Staffing legislation is a unique experience: heart-breaking and exhilarating. As I learned to navigate these often-choppy seas, it became clear to me that the dynamics of the process are just as important as the policy questions at hand. If you want to make meaningful change, you must first master this process; and there is no better way of doing that than through this program."

Gary Weston



"The intersection of politics and policy is fascinating. I have learned how different interests unite to achieve specific policy outcomes. Crafting public policy is largely about listening, absorbing complicated information, thinking quickly but thoroughly and charting a course that bridges diverging interests to make good things happen."

Ana Matosantos

The Academic Component

The academic portion of the Senate Fellows program consists of two graduate seminars taught by faculty from the CSUS Government Department.

Weekly seminars in the Capitol provide an opportunity for Fellows to discuss what they are learning on the job in their respective placements. Written projects and oral presentations are assigned by the program academic advisor.

The academic component includes researching, writing and teaching a case study about real-life dilemmas confronting those involved in shaping public policy. Cases are stories with a lesson. The case method can be a valuable teaching tool. The best cases developed by Senate Fellows are published in a textbook suitable for use in graduate and undergraduate courses.

Fellows register as CSUS graduate students during the Spring 2002 semester. All CSUS fees are paid through the program; there is no cost to individual Fellows.

Senate Fellows receive 12 units of graduate credit from the Government Department. Nine of the units are applicable toward a graduate degree at CSUS, although separate application to a specific degree program is required. Other universities accept the units on a case-by-case basis.

Fellows are eligible to defer their student loans for the duration of the program.

"One of the important things I gained from the program is the ability to work with different kinds of people. As a Fellow, you encounter individuals that represent a wide variety of viewpoints. I learned how to truly listen and be respectful of those with opposing beliefs."

Nicole Kohleriter



Fellows participate in weekly academic seminars conducted in the Capitol.



1999 – 2000 SENATE FELLOWS



Front Row, Left to Right: Nisha Vyas; Vanessa Tyson; Carla Dane; James Jack; Ana Matosantos; Gustavo Arroyo; and Nicole Kohleriter.

Middle Row, Left to Right: Megan Wong; Kabrina Kau; Pablo Tagre; Anita Garcia; and Joo Young Lee.

Back Row, Left to Right: Pariss Knox; Joseph Wright; Gary Weston, Jr.; Darnell Grisby; Joshua Hamilton; and Cory Botts.

1999-2000 Senate Fellows

GUSTAVO ARROYO

Riverside, CA
B.A. (Government),
CSU* Sacramento

CORY BOTTS

Roseville, CA
B.A. (Pol. Sci.), CSU Chico
Teaching Credential,
CSU Sacramento
M.A. (Government) in progress,
CSU Sacramento

CARLA DANE

Mission Viejo, CA
B.A. (History), Yale University

ANITA GARCIA

Los Angeles, CA
B.A. (Pol. Sci.), UC** Berkeley

DARNELL GRISBY

Riverside, CA
B.A. (Pol. Sci.), UC Los Angeles

JOSHUA HAMILTON

Santa Monica, CA
B.A. (Pol. Sci.), UC Los Angeles

JAMES JACK

Pacifica, CA
B.S. (Bus. Admin.),
San Diego State University

KABRINA KAU

Arcadia, CA
B.A. (English), UC Berkeley

PARISSH KNOX

Oakland, CA
B.A. (Sociology & Ethnic Studies),
University of Washington
M.P.P. in progress, UC Berkeley

NICOLE KOHLERITER

Alamo, CA
B.A. (Pol. Sci.), UC Los Angeles

JOO YOUNG LEE

Los Angeles, CA
B.A. (Pol. Sci.), UC Berkeley

ANA MATOSANTOS

Guaynabo, Puerto Rico
B.A. (Pol. Sci. & Fem. Studies),
Stanford University

PABLO TAGRE

Modesto, CA
B.A. (History), UC Berkeley

VANESSA TYSON

Whittier, CA
B.A. (Politics), Princeton University

NISHA VYAS

West Covina, CA
B.A. (Pol. Sci.), UC Berkeley

GARY WESTON, JR.

Lake Elsinore, CA
B.A. (Pol. Sci. & Amer. Studies),
University of Southern California

MEGAN WONG

Palo Alto, CA
B.A. (History), UC Davis

JOSEPH WRIGHT

Modesto, CA
B.A. (Pol. Sci.), CSU Stanislaus

* California State University

** University of California

The Work of a Senate Fellow

What does a Fellow really do?

Fellows perform the full range of professional staff functions associated with busy legislative offices. During the orientation period, Fellows participate in an interview process that results in their assignment to a specific office for the remainder of the program. Although each Fellow's placement is unique, there are two main categories – placements in policy committees and placements in Senators' Capitol offices.

"My Senator entrusted me with his most important piece of legislation and gave me the freedom to pursue a strategy I thought would be the most successful in advancing it."

Carla Dane



Senate Policy Committees

Each committee is chaired by a Senator and is assigned responsibility for considering legislation in specific issue areas. Fellows are part of the professional staff who analyze legislation before it is heard in committee.

Other committee staff responsibilities can include assisting the chairperson with committee-related legislation (s)he is moving through the Legislature, drafting responses to letters from constituents, and special research assignments.

Senate Member's Office

Fellows who are placed in the Capitol offices of Senate members perform a variety of tasks in different issue areas. They help Senators develop and move their own bills through the legislative process.

Fellows also draft responses to constituent letters, write speeches and press releases, meet with constituent groups, speak to school groups, and prepare committee hearing information or other background information on specific issues.



"I was placed in the office of the Minority Whip and was afforded the opportunity to do analyses on a variety of bills in different policy areas. I wrote 'op-ed' pieces and press releases that were published in my Senator's district and staffed a variety of his own legislative measures."

Joseph Wright

"Being assigned to the Budget and Fiscal Review Committee enabled me to experience the convergence of politics, policy and the fiscal constraints confronting the seventh largest economy in the world."

Parish Knox



"My office placement provided me with full responsibility to act as a key player in policy issues ranging from education to criminal justice. The opportunity to craft substantive policy solutions from just a set of ideas has been the most rewarding aspect of the program."

Joo Young Lee

Stipend

Fellows receive monthly stipends as well as health and dental benefits. The amount of the monthly stipend for the 2000-2001 fiscal year is \$1882.

Who Can Apply

Anyone who has graduated from a four-year college or university by June 2001, may apply. There is no preferred major and there is no need to be a recent graduate. Individuals with advanced degrees, and those in mid-career, are encouraged to apply.

Application Process

Every applicant must submit a packet consisting of the enclosed application, an original copy of all college transcripts, two letters of recommendation, and two written statements discussing the purpose of seeking a Senate Fellow position. Complete instructions are included on Page 4 of the application.

The application packet must be postmarked no later than February 28, 2001. Incomplete or late applications will **not** be considered.

"I primarily worked on six bills authored by my Senator. The idea for one of the measures came to me while our class of Fellows was visiting a state prison during the program orientation. When I received my placement, I suggested the idea to the Senator and he agreed to introduce the legislation."

Joshua Hamilton





"I come from a community that is confused, afraid and untrusting with respect to government. As a result of my experiences in the program, I now have the ability to help 'marginalized' communities understand how decisions are made and how they can participate in the process."

Anita Garcia

Selection Process

Eighteen Fellows are selected in May. Fellowships are awarded after an initial screening of applications and a panel interview. Finalists must be available for a panel interview in Los Angeles or Sacramento. The panel is unable to conduct interviews by telephone. Funds are not available to reimburse applicants for travel expenses.

Alternates are also selected and may be offered positions as Fellows at any time before the program begins.

Selection Criteria

Considered among the selection criteria are academic background and grade point average, as well as employment history, depth and breadth of community and extracurricular activities, and interest in the Legislature and public policy.

There are many desirable characteristics associated with prospective Fellows, including exceptional communication skills, initiative, flexibility, adaptability, and well-developed organizational and analytical abilities.

For Further Information

Contact:

California Senate Fellows Center for California Studies

California State University,
Sacramento
6000 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819-6081
(916) 278-6906
E-Mail: calstudies@csus.edu
*Internet: <http://www.csus.edu/calst>

Daniel Friedlander

Program Director
(916) 278-5408

or

California Senate Fellows Senate Rules Committee

State Capitol, Room 500
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 322-7563
Internet: http://www.sen.ca.gov/ftp/sen/fellows/_home/

Applications are available through your State Senator, campus career placement center, or upon request from either of the above addresses.

Applications and the text of this brochure can be printed from the Center and Senate Internet Web sites.

**Includes information about all four fellowship programs administered by the Center for California Studies.*

"Since I am a high school government teacher, I spent a predominant amount of time learning the intricacies of education policy in California. Through staffing a variety of education legislation, I have a clearer picture of how politics and policy relate to my profession."

Cory Botts





"The Senate Fellows program provides an opportunity to grow: to learn how to trust your intuition and to learn from your mistakes; to stretch yourself by being in uncomfortable situations in which you still must function; and to be challenged in ways that you would never have dreamed."

Megan Wong

Filing Deadline: February 28, 2001

Your completed application packet must be postmarked no later than February 28, 2001, to be eligible for consideration. There are no exceptions made regarding the application deadline.

Calendar of Important Dates

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|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| February 28, 2001 | Application deadline |
| May 3 & 4, 2001 | Sacramento interview dates |
| May 11 & 12, 2001 | Los Angeles interview dates |
| May 2001 | Notification of selection |
| October 2001 | Senate Fellows begin orientation |
| September 2002 | Program concludes |

The Senate Fellows program is about learning, working hard and scholarship; but it's also about having a good time and developing friendships. Seventeen other Fellows help to make the fellowship a very special and memorable experience.

